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OSD FOR POPOVICH

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - DECEMBER 23, 2008

11. (U) MINISTRY OF DEFENSE STATE SECRETARY DIES IN SKI
ACCIDENT:

Major General Gordan Cacic, State Secretary of the Ministry of Defense for Policy and International Affairs, died in a ski accident in Italy on Saturday, 20 December 2008. MG Cacic previously served for seven years as the Director of the Military Security and Intelligence Agency. He was a graduate of the U.S. National Defense University, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, as well as the George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies. Cacic was one of the most decorated officers of the Homeland War and his feats of bravery and resilience in the face of enemy fire have legendary status. He was very pro-U.S. in his views and was a force for modernization in the Croatian Armed Forces. He had been thought to be a viable candidate to replace the current CHOD at the end of his mandate. (BMcAloon)

12. (U) NATO PROMOTED VIA TRAM IN ZAGREB:

The City of Zagreb Association of war veterans' clubs and the city's managing company "Zagreb Holding" sponsored a tram (streetcar) promoting Croatia's entrance into NATO. The tram displaying NATO symbols and all member states' flags took its maiden voyage down the streets of the Croatian capital on December 22. It will continue running until Croatia becomes a full member of the Alliance. Mayor Milan Bandic joined the veterans and representatives of the Ministry of Defense on the tram's first trip, which also took citizens for a free ride. Mirko Ljubicic, who organized the campaign on behalf of Zagreb veterans, said to the local press that the "tram campaign was the nicest season's greeting to the veterans, government and the citizens of Croatia." "Moreover, we wish a Merry Christmas to our neighbors in Slovenia too, and ask them to support us because we have always regarded the Slovenes as our friends," Ljubicic said. Embassy Zagreb was represented at the NATO tram event. (ZTomic, DMatijas)

13. (U) SHIPYARD WORKERS DEMONSTRATE:

Brodosplit, 3. Maj and Brodotrogir shipyard workers demonstrated on Monday in Split, Rijeka and Trogir against the privatization model that Croatia agreed to with the EU. President of the Independent Brodosplit Union Assembly (NSB) Nikica Veljaca is adamant that the shipyards not pay the price for "the Croatian ticket to the EU." He maintains that the losses the shipyards have accumulated are not the fault of the workers but rather the "product of poor management, performed by (managers) placed by the Government." The messages from all 3 shipyards were similar. The protesters insist on respecting the privatization laws, including the provision in the privatization tenders that the core business and the jobs remain after sale. (Note: In Croatia, shipbuilding employs some 160,000 people. End Note.) Unions also want the State to keep a 25-percent ownership stake in the shipyards. Deputy Prime Minister Damir Polancec is to meet with union representatives on Tuesday to discuss the situation further. Unless an agreement is reached, the union

threatens to stage demonstration in Zagreb and even in Brussels if necessary. (DMatijas)

14. EU: POLITICIANS NOTE NEED FOR DIALOGUE, BUT BLAST SLOVENIAN "BLACKMAILING":

(U) In the wake of the Slovenian blockage of the opening and closing of several EU chapters, Croatian politicians across the political spectrum have emphasized the need to increase talks between Ljubljana and Zagreb, but were cool to the notion that Croatia should give ground on the border dispute. Croatian PM Ivo Sanader labeled the Slovenian actions as blackmail, and noted that he was willing to meet with Slovenia Premier Bajuh Pahor to resolve the issue in the coming days, but insisted that Croatia would not trade its territory for moving forward in its EU bid. Because Zagreb viewed the Slovenian actions as unprecedented in the history of European integration, Sanader was also adamant that any meeting between the two leaders would include EU officials as well. The leader of Croatia's main opposition party, Zoran Milanovic, urged dialogue between the two capitals, but also characterized Slovenia's actions as blackmail. Several smaller parties emphasized that Croatia should not give-up too much vis-Q-vis the border in order to gain entry to the EU. While Vesna Pusic, leader of the opposition Croatian People's Party and chairwomen of Croatia's bi-partisan EU negotiation council, criticized Slovenia's actions and noted that Croatia would never hamper the EU accession process for other countries (such as Serbia, for one) because of outstanding bilateral disputes. Croatia was able to open the "public procurement" chapter for negotiations, and provisionally close the chapters on "economic and monetary policy",

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"intellectual property", and "information society and media." (DMeges)
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